United Nations A/CN.10/PV.250

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission
250th meeting
Thursday, 17 October 2002, 12 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Maiolini ..... (Italy)

The meeting was called to order at noon.

Opening of the session

The Chairman: I declare open the 2002 organizational session of the Disarmament Commission.

As in past years, the Commission has been convened today for a brief session to deal with organizational matters, including the election of the three remaining members of the Bureau for 2003 and the adoption of a draft provisional agenda, for the 2003 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

With respect to the election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur, allow me to remind delegations of the decision adopted at the 10 April 2002 organizational session, by which the Commission, in accordance with the practice of rotating the chairmanship of the Commission and taking into consideration existing precedents of the Organization, reconfirmed the officers of the Bureau who had been elected for the 2002 session and decided to ask them to remain in office for the 2003 substantive session.

We are not going to take up the issue of the Chairpersons for the subsidiary groups at all. The reason, as the Commission may recall, is that both Chairpersons were elected for the full three-year cycle, in accordance with decision 52/492 of September 1998.

Moreover, the Commission will not have to deal with the dates of the 2003 substantive session either. As the Commission knows, the day before yesterday, I introduced, on behalf of the Bureau, draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.6, entitled "Report of the Disarmament Commission", which sets 31 March to 17 April 2003 as dates for the next substantive session of the Commission. That decision was made on 10 April 2002.

Adoption of the agenda

The Chairman: The provisional agenda for this organizational session is contained in document A/CN.10/L.52. May I take it that the Disarmament Commission adopts the provisional agenda?

The agenda was adopted.

Election of the Chairman and other officers

The Chairman: We still need four candidates for the vacant posts of Vice-Chairmen, two from the Latin American and Caribbean States, one from the Group of African States and one from the Group of Western European and other States. I take this opportunity to renew my plea to the regional groups to expedite the process of nomination of their candidates.

Review of the draft resolution submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session relating to the Disarmament Commission

The Chairman: As members of the Commission are aware, the First Committee has before it a draft resolution that has a specific bearing on the work of the Commission. For the sake of clarity, and for the benefit

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of members of the Commission, I should like to refer to this draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.6, under agenda item 68(c), is entitled "Report of the Disarmament Commission". The relevant paragraphs of the draft resolution, namely operative paragraphs 5 and 6, read as follows:

> "5. [The General Assembly] [r]ecommends that the Disarmament Commission continue the consideration of the following items at its 2003 substantive session:
>
> (a) Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament;
>
> (b) Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms;
>
> 6. Requests the Disarmament Commission to meet for a period not exceeding three weeks during 2003, namely 31 March to 17 April, and to submit a substantive report to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session."

I have just outlined the portions of the draft resolution that have a direct relevance to the work of the Disarmament Commission.

Draft provisional agenda for the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission in 2003

The Chairman: The draft provisional agenda for the 2003 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission is contained in document A/CN.10/L.53.

If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the draft provisional agenda for the 2003 substantive session, as contained in document A/CN.10/L.53.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: The Commission is now invited to take note of document A/CN.10/2003/CRP.1, containing the provisional programme of work and which sets out somewhat detailed information on the schedule of our future work.

Organizational matters

The Chairman: Since we have just considered the provisional agenda of the 2003 substantive session, let us now address the establishment of the Working Groups to deal with the two substantive agenda items. I suggest that we re-establish Working Groups I and II to deal with two specific items on our agenda. Moreover, as in previous years, we have to establish the Committee of the Whole to deal with other substantive and organizational matters.

If there are no comments, I will take it that the Commission wishes to establish these three bodies.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: Let me now briefly turn to the meeting schedules of the 2003 substantive session, as contained in document A/CN.10/2003/CRP.1. This document is prepared based on previous practice and the availability of meeting services. However, considering that the last day of next year's session falls on Good Friday, 18 April, and the fact that the Commission will lose two full meetings, and also taking into account the fact that this is the third and final year, the Bureau offered to consider the possibility of not holding the general debate at all. The reason behind this proposal is that, usually, general debates take five to six meetings during the first week of the substantive session. By cancelling, we will be adding real time for the negotiation of our scheduled meetings.

Now, we do not expect any decision on this issue to be made at this meeting. However, we would like to ask members to consider this proposal and to indicate their preference in the course of informal consultations or to communicate to the Bureau members.

This basically brings to an end the consideration of organizational issues. Allow me therefore to make a few general observations on the substance and procedure of our future work.

We believe that the present international climate could be propitious for some undertakings in the field of disarmament. We hope that this overall atmosphere will positively influence the work of the Disarmament Commission. Disarmament as a general concept is undergoing changes which are rooted in shifting perceptions of national security and new threat assessments.

Consequently, the specific goals that are the material components of disarmament concepts are being refocused. On the one hand, we have witnessed positive developments in tangible disarmament, especially in the field of strategic arms. The new military and political environment between the Russian

Federation and the United States of America has stimulated further efforts towards drastic reductions in strategic nuclear arsenals. Moreover, events such as the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones, the accession of countries to major international disarmament treaties, the readiness to cut arms transfers and to better regulate remaining ones, and the newfound consensus on other weapons of mass destruction could add synergy to the multilateral efforts in this area.

On the other hand, these elements of good will give rise to new hopes and expectations on the part of the international community that not only will traditional security concerns be addressed and eventually find their solution, but that the whole range of emerging problems and new threats will attract increasing attention, as they truly should.

These positive as well as negative trends find their mirror reflection in disarmament machinery. Having duly noted the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to register progress in any of its agenda areas, as well as the fact that, for the first time ever, the Disarmament Commission did not hold its annual substantive session, we still remain confident that the forthcoming session of the Commission will be successful.

There are a number of objective reasons on which this guarded optimism is based. The 2003 substantive session will be the deferred final year of deliberations on two agenda items. This alone creates a certain air of urgency. One can also note with satisfaction that a solid foundation was laid down in the working groups during the previous two years. Conscious of the existing obstacles, we consider a consensus on the difficult issues before the Commission to be politically feasible and practically attainable. This in turn makes the job of delegations so much more challenging and intellectually stimulating.

We hope that both Chairpersons of the working groups, with the good will and constructive spirit of delegations, will continue with their superb efforts towards consensus-building. To do just that, and in pursuit of the mandate of the organizational session given to them, the two Chairpersons of the working groups intend to engage in a series of consultations with members of the Commission from November through mid-February. The Chairs themselves, at a later date, will announce the schedule of these consultations.

For now, allow me to inform the Commission that the goal of these consultations is to closely look at and take stake of developments which will affect the Chairpersons' working papers, since they serve as a basis for discussion. We expect that delegations will make written submissions, proposals and comments on these texts in the course of the forthcoming consultations. Based on those submissions, as well as an oral presentations, the Chairpersons, if possible, will present the updated versions of their working papers. In order to have enough time for this exercise and to better take all views into account, we will ask members to submit their proposals and contributions no later than 15 February. Then, the Chairpersons will need another two to three weeks to update and distribute new texts of their working papers. Thus, delegations will receive new versions at the beginning of March, giving them three weeks to study documents, send them to capitals and seek relevant instructions. I hope that this meets with the Commission's approval.

I should like to note that, according to provisions of the adopted reform programme, all organizational matters should be concluded at the organizational session of the Disarmament Commission. Fortunately, as I said earlier, we do not have many issues to deal with. However, there are several pending issues at this stage, including the nomination of candidates for the remaining post of Vice-Chairman. As I mentioned earlier, this process will require some time to be finalized. Accordingly, it might be advisable for the Commission to suspend its consideration of this issue until a later time so that delegations can carry out further consultations.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that it is the wish of the Disarmament Commission to suspend the consideration of this issue at this stage and to resume it at a later date.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: Before I adjourn this meeting, I should like to encourage regional groups to proceed with their consultations on an urgent basis and to submit their nominations as quickly as possible.

The next meeting of the Disarmament Commission will be announced in the *Journal of the United Nations*.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.